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ABSTRACT

Both spoken and written Polish have undergone profound changes during the past twenty-eight years. The increasing urbanization of Polish culture and the forced change in Polish society are the main factors influencing the change in the language. Indirect evidence of changes which have occurred in the vocabulary and idioms of spoken Polish in the postwar period can be found in textbooks of Polish for foreigners, written by Polish authors and published in Poland. The new features of spoken Polish can be divided into the following groups: (1) new lexical features (including idiomatic constructions), (2) new syntactic structures, and (3) new morphological structures. The differences between the language of the young Polish generation and that of their parents are also discussed. (Author/CLK)

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RECENT CHANGES IN THE SPOKEN POLISH LANGUAGE

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I spent the summer of 1974 in Poland on a sabbatical leave from my university, doing research on the changes which had occurred in spoken and written Polish in the 1946-1974 period. I had not been to Poland for over twenty-seven years, and I experienced a considerable linguistic and cultural shock during my entire stay in Poland. It was only after my return to the States that I was able to view my experience in a more detached and objective manner and, consequently, to arrange the linguistic data I had gathered into well-defined categories suitable for being included in my university courses on Polish linguistics, language, literature, and culture.

It is obvious, to anyone who was born and educated in Poland (as I was) and who visits that country after having been away from it for over a quarter of a century, that both the spoken and the written language have undergone profound changes during the past twenty-eight years. I, for one, see the increasing urbanization of Polish culture and the forced change in Polish society as the main factors influencing the change in the language.

I would like to mention at this point, as an item of useful information, that the new cultural and linguistic material which I collected last summer in Poland (with the generous help and friendly advice of Dr. Danuta Buttler, Chairman of the Department of Slavic Philology of the University of Warsaw) will be incorporated into the third, expanded

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and revised edition of Birkenmayer and Folejewski, Introduction to the Polish Language, to be soon published by The Kosciuszko Foundation in New York. This new edition will consist almost entirely of conversational lessons based on everyday life situations in Poland. The user will be introduced to contemporary spoken Polish starting with Lesson 1, and all the conversations will be recorded on tape by native speakers of Polish and obtainable from my university's Listening-Learning Services Center.

Indirect evidence of changes which have occurred in the vocabulary and idioms of spoken Polish in the postwar period can be found in textbooks of Polish for foreigners, written by Polish authors and published in Poland. The most important of these are:

1) Bastgen, Let's Learn Polish (first published in 1961);
2) Bisko, Karolak, Wasilewska, and Kryński, Mówimy po polsku: A Beginners' Course of Polish (accompanied by a set of records; published in 1966);
3) Kulak, Łaciak, and Żeleszkiewicz, Język polski: Skrypt dla cudzoziemców (with vocabularies in four languages; published in 1966);
4) Wojtowicz and Szkutnik, Gramatyka polska w dialogach (in Polish only, with hints for the Polish teacher; published in 1969).

To my knowledge, there has been no attempt by the authors of Mówimy po polsku to modify that textbook for more effective use by English-speaking learners for whom it was designed. Nevertheless, the spoken Polish represented by Mówimy po polsku appears to be as authentic and up-to-date as that of Gramatyka polska w dialogach, published three years later.

I will speak briefly about the new features of spoken Polish as reflected in the four textbooks just mentioned. For the sake of convenience, I have divided my examples into the following three main groups:

A) New lexical items (neologisms and borrowings);

B) New names of places, institutions, buildings, personalities, etc.;

C) New expressions (also old expressions with new meanings).

Let us first turn our attention to A) new lexical items (neologisms and borrowings). Political situation notwithstanding, there has not been any appreciable influence of spoken Russian on spoken Polish in spite of the fact that until the early 1970s Russian (and not English) was the most widely taught foreign language in Poland's elementary and secondary schools. The majority of the neologisms and borrowings in contemporary spoken and written Polish are of English or (less frequently) French origin. They reflect, more than anything else, the rapid changes in Polish culture which with each passing year is becoming more urbanized and sophisticated through expanding contacts with the highly developed technological societies of such countries as France, Germany, England, and the United States. The dynamic quality of contemporary spoken Polish, with its tendency to create new terms replacing old ones in order to reflect new concepts, is very much like that of contemporary spoken American English. Some of us may remember the Polish attempt in the 1930s to translate "skyscraper" as either drapacz nieba or drapacz chmur (the latter could have been a translocation of the German word Wolkenkratzer). Forty years later, any larger Polish

city has at least one high-rise apartment building (I am using the new American term) which is commonly referred to by Poles as wieżowiec (from wieża, "tower"); on the other hand, an office building is called biurowiec. It is characteristic that many English words have been taken into spoken and written Polish with only slight changes in pronunciation and spelling, though often assuming entirely new meanings. Thus, the original spelling (and pronunciation) have been retained in recently borrowed words such as nonstop, judo, and perhaps hobby. English words borrowed ten or more years ago sometimes have kept their spelling but not their pronunciation (as in dancing, parking, camping), and sometimes they have undergone changes in meaning while preserving their original spelling (as in adapter, "record player"). Still another group consists of those English words which have been "respelled" in Polish but whose pronunciation is still pretty close to the original (examples are skuter and komputer). There seems to be no hesitation among speakers of Polish to use such hybrid Polish-English combinations as domek campingowy ("cabin," without heat or running water), parking strzeżony ("guarded parking area"), radio tranzystorowe (sometimes called radio turystyczne, "portable radio"). Large department stores in main Polish cities have ruchome schody, while those in the Soviet Union have èskalator; the Poles preferred to translate "escalator" into a noun-postpositive adjective combination. As late as 1966, wieczne pióro (a prewar translation of "fountain pen") was still in general use; nearly ten years later, it has been almost completely displaced by the word długopis ("ballpoint pen"). In 1961, an express train was still called torpeda (perhaps a variation of "Lux-Torpeda," the name of a self-propelled Polish fast train before the war); now there is only pociąg ekspresowy.

The new Polish word, wczasy (meaning "a paid vacation") is used interchangeably with urlop, an older word borrowed from German; sometimes the neutral word wakacje is also heard. This co-occurrence of old and new lexical items is also very characteristic of contemporary spoken Polish. Thus, we have prognoza pogody ("weather forecast") and also komunikat meteorologiczny ("weather report"), the latter being used in more formal speech. The cramped spaces in which most Polish people live have challenged the ingenuity of Polish furniture makers, who have produced, among other things, wersalka ("a folding couch") and amerykanka (spelled with a small letter), the latter being an armchair which folds out to make a bed at night. The standard appliance in a Polish kitchen, a small refrigerator, is still called lodówka (literally "icebox"), but the sign in a state appliance store identifies it as chłodziarka (the correct but seldom used Polish word for "refrigerator"). While young people, especially in the last decade, have listened and danced to muzyka rozrywkowa ("light music"), their parents have often relaxed while reading the latest kryminał (short for powieść kryminalna, crime novel) or leafing through a Polish illustrated magazine and looking at rather blurry photographs of still another latający talerz ("flying saucer") which was supposedly sighted in the United States. Many young people travel long distances by hitchhiking (autostop); those who can afford to, buy a motorcycle (colloquially referred to as motor); adults would rather buy a used car (przechodzony samochód). Employed people, especially research scientists and government and Party officials, often refer to their tasks as czasochłonne ("time-consuming") and pracochłonne ("labor-consuming"); they must have

harmonogram, that is, a carefully planned weekly or monthly schedule of activities, especially if they work in such demanding fields as cybernetyka ("computer science") and informatyka ("data systems").

B) New names of places, institutions, buildings, personalities, etc. Often, as will be shown by examples taken from the previously mentioned textbooks of Polish, a convenient abbreviation is created to denote a central housing district, a certain type of store, a particular state enterprise; soon it is pronounced as if it were a word, and sometimes other new words are derived from it. This phenomenon is as widespread in Polish as it is in English. Thus, for example, the abbreviation for Centralny Dom Towarowy ("Central Department Store") is CDT, pronounced ce-de-te in Polish; however, most people call this type of store simply cedet, and this new word can even take grammatical endings, as in Kupiłem to w cedecie ("I bought it in the C.D.T."). Another example is MDM (em-de-em), which stands for Marszałkowska Dzielnica Mieszkaniowa ("Marshal Street Housing District") in Warsaw. Most students at Polish universities belong to ZSP (zet-es-pe) or Zrzeszenie Studentów Polskich ("Association of Polish Students"); some belong to ZMP (zet-em-pe) or Związek Młodzieży Polskiej ("Union of Polish Youth"), and a student activist belonging to the latter organization is sometimes referred to as zetempowiec. Warsaw, the capital, boasts the only Supersam ("Supermarket") in the country, with shopping carts and American-style checkout counters; the word sam is an abbreviation of sklep samoobsługowy ("self-service store"). Also in Warsaw, PAN (all capital letters) or Polska Akademia Nauk ("Polish Academy of Sciences") is housed in several buildings including Pałac Kultury i

Nauki ("Palace of Culture and Science"). The sentence Pracuję w PANie (capital letters except the last two) means "I work at the Polish Academy of Sciences," while Był na posiedzeniu PANu (capital letters except the last one) means "He was at a meeting of the Polish Academy of Sciences." In summer (which is also the tourist season), inhabitants of Poland and visitors to Poland alike stand in line to Bortex ice cream shops or shop for gifts or souvenirs at Cepelia stores, probably unaware that these short and easy-to-remember words stand for the long names of state enterprises engaged in producing ice cream or buying up the production of Polish village art and craft shops.

In 1966, the rapidly growing coastal cities of Gdynia, Sopot, and Gdansk were merged into one administrative unit known since then as Trójmiasto ("Tri-City"). Every large Polish city seems to have its Dom Kultury ("House of Culture"), its Ulica Rewolucji Październikowej ("October Revolution Street"), and its Plac Komuny Paryskiej ("Paris Commune Square").

So much for the new places; let us now turn to the new personalities. To us, who are so used to seeing and hearing local weather forecasters on our home television screens, it will come as a surprise to learn that the Polish state television network until recently had two official weather forecasters: Wicherek ("Mr. Gale") and Chmurka ("Cloudlet"). These, in addition to Polish children's favorite book character, Kubuś Puchatek (the Polish equivalent of Winnie-the-Pooh), are the only new personalities mentioned in the textbook, Język polski: Skrypt dla cudzoziemców (published, as I have mentioned, in 1966).

C) New expressions (and also old expressions with new meanings reflecting new usage). These are particularly numerous in Let's Learn Polish and in Gramatyka polska w dialogach. In the former, the common expression Jak się masz! is explained in a footnote as follows: "A form of greeting which may be used when addressing someone with whom we are on rather familiar terms." (Page 111.) Two examples are given: Jak się masz, Adam! (page 111) and Jak się masz, Janku! (page 166). These could be translated thus: "How are you doing, Adam?"; 'How are you, Johnny?" Since the formal Jak się Pan/Pani ma? ("How are you, Sir/Madam?") is nowhere to be found in all the four textbooks of Polish for foreigners, a tentative conclusion can be drawn that this particular expression is less used in contemporary spoken Polish. And indeed, it has been labeled "old-fashioned" by a number of recent visitors from Poland with whom I have had the opportunity to converse. Gramatyka polska w dialogach contains some interesting examples of changes in grammar form and in meaning, namely: To nie warto czytać (instead of Tego nie warto czytać, "This isn't worth reading"), where the accusative case is used instead of the genitive after a negated verbal expression; the new Polish simile, płakać jak dziecko ("to cry like a child"), though the old Polish simile was, curiously enough, płakać jak bóbr ("to weep like a beaver"); słodki jak lukrecja ("sweet as licorice"), used by contemporary speakers of Polish to denote someone pretending to be nice, was originally nudny jak lukrecja ("dull as licorice"). The word plan, which once meant only "a (city) map" has now acquired a new meaning, as in wypełnić plan produkcyjny ("to fulfill a plan of production"); and its derivations, the verb planować/zaplanować, the adjective planowy, and the adverb planowo, are regularly used in current spoken Polish.

Examples follow:

Kiedy jest zaplanowany kurs w roku przyszłym?

("When is the course planned for next year?")

Planowo to wykonałeś. ("You have done it according to plan.")

Traditional Polish proverbs and sayings sometimes appear in a new form; thus, the saying Nie pożyczaj, zły obyczaj ("Don't lend money, it's a bad custom") has become Dobry zwyczaj nie pożyczaj ("A good habit is not to lend money")--which proves that even in these modern times the didactic or educational use of proverbs and sayings is not entirely overlooked by authors of textbooks of Polish for foreigners.

I would like to close this account of recent changes in spoken Polish by referring to my own experiences in Poland during my stay there in the summer of 1974. I stayed mostly in two large cities, Warsaw and Kraków, with short (one- or two-day) trips to Częstochowa, Katowice, Poznań, Gdańsk, and Szczecin. Not having an automobile at my disposal, I had to travel by train from one city to another and to use public transportation (mostly streetcars and buses) while in those cities. On trains, I reached for my ticket as soon as I heard Bileciki poproszę! (an expression invariably pronounced in a pleasant voice by a young and attractive pani konduktor, smartly dressed in a Polish State Railway uniform) or Bilety proszę! (another expression, but used mostly by pan konduktor). On buses there was only kierowca (the word szofer is taboo in present-day Poland), and on streetcars there was either motorniczy or motornicza (words meaning "motorman" and "motorwoman," respectively); but there was no conductor--instead, passengers themselves, under what appeared to be an honor system, punched their tickets in the machine known as kasownik ("ticket puncher"). This system was referred to as

samoobsługa ("self-service"). I got used to it fairly soon, all the more so that it was essentially the same in every large Polish city.

During the month or so that I lived in Warsaw I sometimes had lunch in bar mleczny ("dairy bar"), where I would get, for example, a portion of dumplings and a glass of milk for an equivalent of 75 cents in Polish money. Occasionally I would cook my own meals in the apartment where I stayed. In order to get the groceries (produkty or artykuły spożywcze), I had to go to a store with the sign SPOŻYWCZY ("FOOD STORE"), where I would get bread, rolls, butter or margarine (the latter is known as masło roślinne, "vegetable butter"), a piece of meat or sausage, and maybe an envelope of dried soup extract (zupa w proszku). Vegetables, including potatoes (called kartofle in Warsaw), I had to buy at a little green booth on the sidewalk, called zieleniak; passers-by, including myself, each one carrying a folding plastic bag with handles (siatka), would purchase whatever vegetables and fruit they would need for the day, in amounts calculated to fit inside their small refrigerators. And, yes, canned orange juice (sok pomarańczowy) could be bought at a different booth known simply as kiosk and selling anything from candy and chocolate bars to (yes) Coca-Cola in bottles. Incidentally, this soft drink is often referred to as either Koka or Kola (for example. Proszę butelkę Koli, or Proszę o dwie butelki Koki). One day I complained about my rather monotonous diet (bread, potatoes, sausage) to a relative, who suggested that I buy some mrożonki ("frozen foods") and try to prepare them, or go to where I see the sign GARMAŻERIA ("TAKE-HOME PREPARED FOODS") and buy some pasztet ("meat loaf"), kiełbasa z rożna ("grilled sausage"), or other heat-and-serve dishes. Well, I went

to restauracja I-szej klasy instead and enjoyed a tasty and ample dinner for the equivalent of three dollars in zlotys. Generally speaking, one can eat for one third of this amount in any first-class restaurant (usually located in an older hotel) which has kuchnia dietetyczna ("dietetic cuisine").

Let me say a few words about the young Polish generation, that is, about my nieces and nephews whom I met, many of them for the first time, during my stay in Poland. Their spoken language is quite different from that of their elders, a phenomenon which can be also observed in the spoken language of American teenagers and college students. They often adopt American clothing styles (dżinsy or farmerki, "blue jeans," for both sexes, spódnica mini or maxi, as well as rajstopy, "pantyhose," for girls and young women); in their speech, they use quite a few words adapted from American English (nonstop, skuter, komputer, buldożer, klipsy, "clip-on earrings," and many others). They deserve the credit for creating many colloquial expressions, such as: bombowa prywatka, "a terrific party," złapać gumę, "to get a flat tire," na zaś, "for an emergency," mieć zaskórniaki, "to have emergency cash," zapięte na ostatni guzik, "done with utmost accuracy," and many other colorful idioms too numerous to mention. Having been born and educated in Poland, and having spoken a similar language during my high-school and college days in Warsaw, I had little difficulty in understanding the spoken Polish of the present young generation. However, such expressions would surely baffle any foreign learner of Polish hearing them, all the more so that most of them are not found in any dictionaries. Incidentally, The Great Polish-English Dictionary by Stanisławski

(published in Poland in 1966) is still the best Polish-English dictionary available as far as new words and their meanings are concerned.

I hope that I have been able to give you a rather complete picture of the most important recent changes in the spoken Polish language.